



UK Government

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# UK Government Communication Plan 2024/25



# FOREWORD

*The Government Communication Service (GCS) explains government policy and helps citizens access the support they need, from childcare to pensions.*

**W**e change behaviours for the public good, from road safety to health promotion. We promote the UK on the international stage. We understand our audiences through research, data and insight. We listen to stakeholders and communities. We inform, engage and motivate our fellow civil servants.

This annual plan sets out how the GCS will support the Prime Minister's priorities. It shows the power of communication as a critical lever for Government to achieve policy goals - from helping people stop smoking and reducing road deaths, to encouraging energy efficiency and driving trade and investment.

This year's plan also highlights our priorities as a profession and the progress we have made since launching our [2022-25 GCS Strategy](#), 'Performance with Purpose'. This set a vision for a more collaborative, innovative and highly-skilled profession. I am proud to say that we have now completed more than 75% of the strategy's commitments, and are on track to deliver the remaining commitments by 2025. Our focus on innovation means GCS is increasingly recognised as world-leading in our use of new technology. The [Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development \(OECD\)](#) recently found that many of our GCS teams are leading innovation and excellence within the field of government communications.

I am committed to continuing this progress and supporting all teams within GCS to operate at their very best. To do this, we need to continue to foster a culture of innovation - one where people feel supported to try new things, while understanding that new technology comes with new challenges. As government communicators, we need to rise to those challenges by doubling down on our ethical values. People should be able to trust what they see and hear from government channels. They should know how we are using technology on their behalf and this must be done in a way that maintains public consent. Technology may change, but our ethical principles endure.

We also need to continue to get the basics right. This means further breaking down silos across government and working together to make our communications more impactful and effective. Through early and ongoing collaboration with other professions, as well as within our own, we can maximise the power of communication in supporting the effective design and implementation of government policy.

**Simon Baugh**  
Chief Executive,  
Government Communication Service

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*Image opposite top right: Simon Baugh, Chief Executive, Government Communication Service (GCS) with the 2024 Project Spark innovation team*

*Cover image: Prime Minister Rishi Sunak visits the Air Ambulance Northern Ireland base, February 2024*

# GCS ACHIEVEMENTS IN 2023/24

## Delivering impact



The Ministry of Defence hosted **165 media outlets** at UK training camps to promote Operation Interflex and showcase the UK's continued solidarity with Ukraine. Operation Interflex has now trained 52,000 Ukrainian soldiers, the largest military training operation on British soil since the Second World War.



The first phase of the 'It All Adds Up' energy efficiency campaign in 2023, led by the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero, is estimated to have **saved UK households £120 million** on energy bills, and **saved HM Treasury £80 million** through reduced demand on the Energy Price Guarantee.



In support of the Royal Household, the Department for Culture, Media and Sport led the communications for the Coronation of Their Majesties King Charles III and Queen Camilla, delivering **90 announcements and more than 100,000 news stories** over the Coronation weekend. This included 37 UK splashes and 230,000 views of public guidance, **reaching an estimated global audience of 2 billion in 125 countries**.



The cross-government 'Help for Households' campaign has resulted in **19 million GOV.UK visits** since its launch. In 2023/24, the campaign continued to bring together different cost of living support schemes under one brand - from childcare support to pension credit to the cost of living payments - and **awareness of the support schemes reached over 80%**.



HM Revenue and Customs' digital service campaign has successfully increased app usage. There are now **1.2 million monthly users (up from 695,000 in April 2023)**. A specific focus was on driving usage among 16-21 year olds, who are responsible for 69% of all calls regarding National Insurance numbers. With a 6% increase in new app users between the ages of 16-20, phone calls to the National Insurance helpline were **down 32.1% between April-December 2023**.



The Department for Science, Innovation and Technology is supporting more young people to build digital skills and reach their potential by connecting them to the Government's cyber security learning programme. Their digital and cyber skills campaign has helped to drive **74,408 programme registrations**, compared to 45,000 in 2023.



The Cabinet Office's six-week Emergency Alerts campaign successfully raised **public awareness of the national test among UK adults to 92%**.



VisitBritain's international marketing campaigns resulted in **£210 million worth of additional visitor spend**, with the equivalent of £15 spent in the British economy for every £1 invested in the campaign.



The Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency's campaign has proved an effective tool in keeping vehicle tax evasion low; **72% of campaign recognisers took action after seeing an advert** in 2023 (e.g. checking their vehicle tax status, taxing their vehicle or setting up a direct debit).

## Raising professional standards



Introduced a 10% virtual innovation budget as part of our spend control, leading to **more than 30 innovation projects** being piloted across Government.



Launched GCS Advance, a substantial new learning and development programme that will deliver a measurable step change in the skills of UK Government communicators.



Updated the Modern Communications Operating Model (MCOM) 3.0 and the GCS Evaluation Cycle to support teams across the GCS in developing outstanding government communications.



**18,278 delegates** attended Civil Service Live, with 80% saying they will do something differently as a result of attending events.



Our new GCS AI co-pilot brings together a high-performing Large Language Model (LLM) overlaid by GCS data and standards to help communicators work more efficiently and effectively.



GCS guidance and frameworks were recognised by the OECD as an international example of sector-leading practice.





## CHAPTER ONE

# Our Priorities



## THE PRIME MINISTER'S PRIORITIES

*“Last year the Prime Minister put in place five priorities to drive this country forward. Despite the challenges dealing with the legacy of Covid, the consequences of the Russian invasion of Ukraine and the dangers of war in the Middle East, we have made progress on all five priorities.*

*“We have halved inflation, the economy outperformed expectations, debt is on track to fall, we’re making progress on waiting lists, and small boat crossings fell by over a third. The economy, our health service, and our border security are the most important issues facing the country this year, as they were last year, and we must go further.*

- **Halving inflation** – inflation is down from 10.7 and wages are now rising faster than prices, easing cost of living pressures and allowing us to cut taxes. The IMF expect inflation to fall further to 2.2 per cent by the end of 2024 – lower than the euro area and the US. This was no accident – we took difficult but necessary decisions to control borrowing and public sector pay, supporting the Bank of England to do their job.
- **Growing the economy** – the economy has done better than predicted and outperformed European neighbours like Germany, creating more jobs and opportunities and supporting our public services. In 2022, the OBR were predicting a year-long recession, but we have so far avoided that. Our policies are working.
- **Reducing debt** – debt is on track to fall, delivering greater financial security for our country. In autumn 2022, debt was expected to rise to more than 104 per cent of GDP, which is why we took decisive action to get the public finances on a sustainable path. Since then, debt was revised down in each OBR forecast and is on track to fall as a percentage of GDP – meeting our fiscal rule to get it down.
- **Cutting waiting lists** – we eliminated the longest waits in the NHS and we’re making progress to cut waiting lists, as we make sure people get the care they need. Thanks to record investment, delivering over 200 new community diagnostic centres and surgical hubs, and more doctors and nurses, the NHS is carrying out more operations and procedures than ever before. We have also brought forward the first ever Long-Term Workforce Plan in the NHS’s 75-year history, allowing us to train more doctors and nurses here at home and rolling out better ways of working across the NHS.
- **Stopping the boats** – small boat crossings fell by more than a third last year for the first time since records began, as we crack down on the criminal gangs and control our borders. We are continuing to go further and a long-term solution requires a deterrent. People must know that if they come here illegally, they won’t get to stay, that’s why our flagship legislation means that anyone who arrives here illegally can no longer claim asylum.”

*Image opposite: Prime Minister Rishi Sunak hosts weekly Cabinet meeting in 10 Downing Street, November 2023*

# ECONOMY & SKILLS

## Overarching communication objective:

- *Build confidence in the UK economy by supporting new, growing and established businesses and giving employers access to the skilled workforce they need.*

## Campaign key performance indicators (KPIs):

- *Increase awareness, understanding and take-up of the Government's business support services and programmes for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs).*
- *Increase in young people, adults and employers exploring technical education qualifications and skills offers.*
- *Generate qualified foreign direct investment leads.*
- *Increase consideration of the UK among trade, investment, tourism, talent and education audiences.*

**W**e will continue to support the Prime Minister's economic priorities - to halve inflation, grow the economy and reduce debt. Good progress has already been made across these areas and we will use powerful proof points that challenge misconceptions and highlight the economic opportunities that exist in the UK. From our booming AI and tech sectors to our award-winning creative industries, we will showcase the UK's economic strengths to businesses at home and across the globe.

Representing 99% of UK businesses, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) are crucial to the UK's economic strength. We will work in partnership with businesses to understand their needs, including creating a Small Business Council, and the recently launched 'Help to Grow' campaign will raise awareness and drive take-up of the Government support available to help SMEs to succeed. The [campaign website](#) creates a single destination for new, growing and established businesses to access key advice and support - from set-up and financing, to management courses, mentorships and export opportunities.

Our multi award-winning international [GREAT campaign](#) enhances the UK's reputation around the world and drives UK-wide economic growth. GREAT is used in 164 countries worldwide and consistently delivers returns on investment of over 15:1. GREAT draws together the efforts of government departments, public bodies, businesses and high-profile individuals from the private and creative sectors to showcase the very best our nation has to offer. High-impact, influence and consideration driving marketing in key global regions supports targeted behaviour change campaigns in the highly competitive markets of international tourism, trade, investment, education and talent. In 2024/25, GREAT will continue to unite the UK's global profile under one strong, consistent visual identity. GREAT will focus in particular on improving

perceptions of the UK amongst US, European and Gulf Cooperation Council audiences, inviting prospective tourists, students and businesses to join the UK and 'See Things Differently'.

We will also support the Government's commitment to becoming a science and technology (S&T) superpower by ensuring the UK continues to attract, grow and retain the right level of investment and talent. A new campaign by the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology (DSIT) will focus on driving domestic investment in UK S&T and encouraging S&T businesses and entrepreneurs to innovate and scale their businesses here in the UK. The campaign will build confidence in the UK's S&T ecosystem by showcasing its strengths and investment opportunities.

A skilled workforce is the foundation for a strong economy and it's crucial that employers have access to the right skills for current and future business needs. The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) will engage those who are currently economically inactive, supporting them to get back into the workplace. The '[Jobhelp](#)' campaign motivates audiences by showcasing the wide range of support available, the value of their transferable skills and opportunities to upskill.

The 'It All Starts with Skills' campaign, led by the Department for Education (DfE), will also inspire adults, employers and young people (and their parents) to explore - and benefit from - technical education qualifications and skills offers. This replaces three previous skills campaigns, in line with the ambition for fewer, bigger, better campaigns that simplify government policy for audiences. Whether they're growing a business, switching careers or just starting out, the campaign aims to motivate people to explore their options through the new [Skills for Careers website](#), make informed choices, and gain the skills and qualifications they need to progress - ultimately, giving businesses the skilled workforce they need for the economy to thrive.

## *Investing in growth for every region*

*Network North is the Government's £36 billion plan to improve everyday local journeys for people - unlocking potential, driving growth and transforming communities. The Department for Transport (DfT) will continue to promote Network North, ensuring communities are aware of local transport projects and the benefits being unlocked in their area.*

# HEALTH AND THE NHS

## Overarching communication objective:

- *Improve the nation's mental and physical health by driving positive behaviour change and effective use of the NHS.*

## Campaign key performance indicators (KPIs):

- *Drive effective use of health services including A&E, primary care, Pharmacy First and dentistry – as well as access routes such as NHS 111 – to reduce NHS pressures and cut waiting lists.*
- *Increase use of digital routes to access general practice and wider NHS services (including via the NHS App) to improve patient experience.*
- *Encourage current smokers to quit and support the commitment to create a Smokefree Generation.*
- *Improve outcomes for major conditions, such as cancer and strokes.*
- *Support women to take positive action on their health across a range of reproductive and maternal health issues.*
- *Maximise uptake of childhood immunisations, seasonal flu and COVID-19 vaccinations.*
- *Improve mental health support by encouraging usage of Every Mind Matters resources and access to NHS Talking Therapies services.*
- *Support parents to improve their child's life chances and get them school ready.*
- *Increase blood, plasma and organ donation.*



**C**ommunication offers a critical lever in ensuring people receive the care they need by accessing the NHS at the right time, in the right way. We will encourage the public to make effective use of health services, helping to reduce NHS pressures and cut waiting lists.

Thanks to the widespread introduction of online forms on GP websites and new functionality in the NHS App, it is now quicker and easier than ever to access health and care services online. We'll help people make the most of the NHS App by driving understanding of its new features and functionality. A new campaign will also tackle low awareness and uptake of these digital access routes for general practice (GP), empowering patients and freeing up GP phone lines for those who need them.

The newly launched Pharmacy First scheme enables patients to get treatment and medicines from their local pharmacy for seven common conditions and has the potential to free up to 10 million GP appointments a year. A mass awareness campaign across broadcast and digital channels will encourage greater use of the scheme, while targeted activity will remind specific audiences to consider using pharmacy in their moment of need.

To support the Government's [Dentistry Recovery Plan](#), we will promote the 'New Patient Premium', designed to help patients who haven't been to a dentist in over two years to get an NHS appointment. An England-wide drive will maximise take-up of 2.5 million new appointments amongst those eligible. Alongside this, the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) will encourage

positive early brushing habits for babies and children, as part of the broader 'Start for Life' campaign. [Start for Life](#) shows the small things parents and families can do in early childhood to support lifelong emotional and physical health, as well as school readiness. The campaign signposts audiences to actionable resources and tools, and the support available from Family Hubs.

Vaccines have made once-common deadly diseases rare, but falling vaccination rates put this progress at risk. Working with the UK Health Security Agency and NHS England, DHSC's new, nationwide campaign will promote the benefits of childhood vaccination, ensuring parents and carers feel empowered and motivated to give their children the full course of their routine childhood vaccinations. Communication will also continue to play a crucial role in supporting the operational roll-out of flu and COVID-19 vaccines by encouraging take-up among eligible groups.

Smoking is the UK's biggest preventable killer, causing around 1 in 4 cancer deaths and costing the economy and wider society £17 billion each year. In October 2023, the Prime Minister announced the most significant Government public health intervention in a generation to phase out smoking. Planned legislation will raise the age of sale for tobacco products year-on-year and introduce measures to reduce youth vaping, in a bid to create the first Smokefree Generation. 2024/25 will see a new programme of communication activity under the 'Better Health' brand to explain these changes, encourage people to join the [Smokefree Generation](#) and accelerate the rate of quit attempts among smokers.

*Image above: Prime Minister Rishi Sunak visits Gentle Dental in Newquay, February 2024*



We will support the NHS Long Term Plan's ambition to provide better care for major health conditions. Stroke is the fourth leading cause of death in the UK and is estimated to cost the UK £26 billion per year. Our 'Act FAST' campaign will encourage immediate action on stroke symptoms and help save lives. A programme of cancer prevention campaigns will also increase knowledge of 'red flag' symptoms and address underlying barriers around recognition, supporting our ambition to diagnose 75% of all cancers at stages 1 and 2.

Organ, blood and plasma donors save and transform lives. We will increase the number of people recording an 'Opt in' decision on the NHS Organ Donation Register and encourage donations of vital blood and plasma through highly-targeted and tailored communications, as well as engagement with multicultural

communities where more donors are needed.

Led by the DHSC in partnership with the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS), the 'Every Mind Matters' campaign will continue to raise awareness of mental wellbeing guidance and tools. It will also tackle stigma around mental health and loneliness and ensure those who are struggling to cope with symptoms of anxiety and depression know how to access NHS Talking Therapies services.

A brand new campaign will also support women to take positive action and improve their health. We will work with a coalition of partners to reach women at various stages of their lives, encouraging them to access reproductive and maternal health care as and when they need it.

### **Managing winter pressures**

*Urgent and Emergency Care services experience high levels of pressure over the winter months. To help the NHS manage this, the 'Help Us Help You' campaign will drive use of the NHS 111 service - by phone, online and via the NHS App - so that more people can be assessed and directed to the right service for their needs. The annual autumn/winter campaign also encourages eligible people to take up free flu and COVID-19 boosters to protect themselves from serious illness and help reduce pressure on NHS services at their busiest time.*

Image above: Prime Minister Rishi Sunak visits the Air Ambulance Northern Ireland base, February 2024



# SECURITY AT HOME AND ABROAD

## Overarching communication objective:

- To support national resilience and security, including border security, by challenging disinformation and promoting truthful narratives.

## Campaign key performance indicators (KPIs):

- Dissuade potential migrants from using dangerous or illegal methods to reach the UK.
- Maintain support for Ukraine among domestic and international audiences.
- Drive adoption of behaviours that protect against fraud.
- Build media literacy skills to support resilience against mis- and disinformation techniques.

## Securing our borders

The Government has a clear plan to tackle illegal migration and stop the boats. To support this, the Home Office will deliver targeted communications which deter people from making illegal, dangerous, and unnecessary journeys before they have decided to leave their home country. Following a successful pilot in Albania, around two fifths of the target audience said they were less interested in moving to the UK after seeing the adverts, and one third said they have changed or reconsidered plans to travel illegally.

## Defending our interests and allies

The Ministry of Defence (MOD) and the Armed Forces protect the safety, security and interests of the UK, at home and abroad. From operating at the heart of NATO, the world's most successful military alliance, to leading the international effort to support Ukraine, communication plays a key role in delivering as well as promoting key UK foreign and defence policy priorities.

The UK has committed £7 billion in military aid to Ukraine since the conflict began, including £2.5 billion in military aid in 2024/25. This will allow the Government to deliver advanced capabilities, equipment and training to the Armed Forces of Ukraine, through initiatives such as Operation Interflex, which has now trained over 52,000 Ukrainian soldiers under UK armed forces programmes. We will continue to use influential international and domestic communications to show our continued solidarity with Ukraine, working with global partners and allies.

2024 is a historic year for NATO, as the Alliance celebrates its 75th birthday. We will use this milestone to engage audiences of all ages and highlight NATO's pivotal role in promoting global peace and stability since its foundation. 6 June 2024 also marks the 80th anniversary of the Normandy Landings. Working with the Commonwealth War Graves Commission, the Normandy Memorial Trust, the Royal British Legion and the British Embassy in Paris, the MOD will lead a communication campaign throughout the Spring to involve members of the UK public and overseas audiences in commemorating the anniversary, which will culminate in a series of events across the UK and in France.

Amidst recent rapid developments in technology and AI, more than 40% of the world's population are due to vote in 2024. Work to guard against misinformation and disinformation has never been more important, and we will support cross-government efforts in this crucial area. We will help build awareness and understanding of manipulation techniques and educate UK audiences on how to protect themselves and others.

## Tackling crime

Since its launch in 2022, the Government's 'Enough' campaign has helped to tackle violence against women by delivering a shift in the attitudes and behaviours that underpin abuse. Utilising cutting-edge behavioural science and an innovative combination of communication channels and partnerships, the multi-award winning campaign will continue to deepen society's knowledge of these crimes, encourage people to safely challenge abuse and prompt reflection among perpetrators.

The Home Office is also continuing its work to support communities affected by neighbourhood crime through the delivery of the Government's [Anti-social Behaviour Action Plan](#). Teams are working closely with police forces, local authorities and other agencies to take action against neighbourhood crime and signpost those affected to advice and support. Local stakeholder channels as well as national, regional and social media are being used to reach key audiences and build confidence and resilience by demonstrating the real-world impact of interventions.

The UK is a world leader in online safety, and the new Online Safety Act will deliver the most powerful child protection laws in a generation, while ensuring adults are better empowered to take control of their online lives. DSIT will work with the communications regulator, Ofcom, to ensure the public and stakeholders, including social media companies, understand the changes being brought into force. Social media platforms will be held responsible for the content they host and will face significant fines if they do not act rapidly to prevent and remove illegal content and stop children seeing material that is harmful to them. The Act makes it a criminal offence to share intimate images without consent and new laws will further criminalise the non-consensual sharing of intimate deepfakes.

The Home Office and National Cyber Security Centre are working together to keep communities safe from fraud, an ever-increasing danger in our society with an estimated 3.2 million offences each year. The new ['Stop! Think Fraud' campaign](#), launched in February 2024, will educate audiences on how they can recognise and protect themselves from fraudulent activity. This campaign demonstrates the power of partnerships, not only between multiple government bodies, but also with a wide range of industry and third-sector stakeholders who will play an instrumental role in spreading the knowledge and tools needed to stay ahead of scams. It draws on the expertise of leading counter-fraud experts and includes an online fraud hub which will provide concise, simple to follow advice and signpost victims to relevant organisations for further support.

*Image opposite: Prime Minister Rishi Sunak meets the President of Ukraine Volodymyr Zelenskyy at the Mariyinsky Palace, January 2024*



### ***Strategic communication as a tool for global influence***

*Communication plays an increasingly critical role in modern national security, and communicators must therefore also be equipped with information statecraft capability in a rapidly-changing global environment. GCS developed the [PITCH toolkit](#) to provide a structured approach for planning and delivering effective communications internationally. [PITCH](#) shows how to use partnerships, insight, trusted voices, compelling content and honesty to tell our story well and truthfully. It brings together helpful context on the modern information environment, as well as best practices, principles and case studies.*



# SUPPORTING FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES

## Overarching communication objective:

- *Demonstrate to communities the support and schemes offered by Government to improve their individual, social and community wellbeing.*

## Campaign key performance indicators (KPIs):

- *Increase take-up of government support, including Pension Credit, Child Trust Funds, Marriage Allowance and help with childcare costs.*
- *Improve quality of reporting to StreetLink to create more referrals and more meaningful outcomes for homeless people, rough sleepers and communities.*
- *Increase engagement with local Levelling Up projects.*
- *Support households to reduce their energy consumption and adopt energy efficiency measures, including increased uptake of Heat Pumps.*

**T**he increased cost of living, brought about by a tough global economic environment, has added pressure to many households. Since 2022, the 'Help for Households' campaign has played an instrumental role in helping people understand and access the Government schemes available to help with the cost of living. The cross-government campaign brings together financial support and advice from across departments to communicate one coherent and comprehensive package - from support with childcare and travel costs, to free leisure activities and energy saving advice.

DfE, in partnership with DWP and HMRC, will continue to raise awareness and understanding of the Government's expanding childcare offer. The 'Childcare Choices' campaign will build an understanding of the range of support available, enabling parents to return to work or increase their working hours. It will also target new parents and help them plan ahead so they can pursue the career of their choice alongside their family responsibilities.

The Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities (DLUHC) will continue to support some of the most vulnerable in our communities with their campaign promoting the StreetLink service. StreetLink enables members of the public to help connect rough sleepers with local support services by alerting outreach teams. Focusing on areas with the most acute rough sleeping issues, DLUHC's campaign will raise awareness and understanding of the StreetLink service, helping to ensure that more alerts result in referrals and meaningful outcomes.

The Ministry of Justice will continue to protect communities by building awareness of victims' rights under the Victims' Code. They will work with agencies across the criminal justice system to ensure the Code is communicated effectively and consistently to victims and potential victims of crime, helping increase confidence in and awareness of the support available.

The Government's Levelling Up agenda is designed to spread opportunity and strengthen local communities, ensuring people can feel proud of where they live, wherever they are in the UK. DLUHC's Levelling Up campaign focuses on reaching small and medium sized businesses, promoting local investment opportunities and making it easy for them to get involved.

Everyone has the right to live in a safe, secure and decent home. The 'Make Things Right' campaign will continue to raise awareness and understanding of the social housing complaints process. Breaking down the complaints process into three accessible steps will help increase

confidence in resolution and encourage more residents to report or escalate a complaint. The campaign will be supported by ongoing partnership activity with community and support organisations who will help reach vulnerable social housing residents.

DLUHC will also promote the Government's reforms in the private rented sector and the leasehold system. The Leasehold and Freehold Reform Bill will make it cheaper and easier for more leaseholders to extend their lease, buy their freehold and take over management of their building. The Renters (Reform) Bill will abolish 'no fault' evictions and reform landlords' possession grounds. DLUHC's targeted communications will ensure audiences understand how they can make the most of these changes, which will help to better the lives of millions of renters and homeowners in England and Wales.

The Office for Veterans' Affairs (OVA) will continue to ensure the UK's 2 million veterans and their families can access support to enable them to thrive in civilian life. Working closely with local, regional and national partners such as veteran charities, healthcare organisations and businesses, the OVA will encourage engagement with specialist veteran services and ensure veterans contribute their extensive skills to the UK economy by maximising access to employment opportunities. Their communications will also continue to recognise the contribution all veterans have made to the country and promote the positive stories that support integration into civilian communities.

The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs will also continue their work with the Environment Agency to support communities most at risk of flooding. Their hyper-localised communications prepare vulnerable audiences by increasing understanding of the actions people can take if flooding should occur, and of the support available to them.

## *Communities as a partner, as well as an audience*

*The 2023 Edelman Trust Barometer shows that local businesses, people and employers are some of the most trusted voices in society. As such, they offer powerful partnership opportunities. Working with local community representatives and organisations can help government communicators to more effectively and authentically reach, engage and listen to our audiences.*

# PUBLIC SECTOR RECRUITMENT

## Overarching communication objective:

- Drive sufficient volumes of high-quality applications for roles across the wider public sector.

## Campaign key performance indicators (KPIs):

- Drive sufficient applications for reserves and regular roles across the Armed Forces.
- Drive expressions of interest in adult social care jobs.
- Drive awareness and consideration of, and applications to, the HM Prison and Probation Service and voluntary magistrate roles.
- Increase consideration of, and applications to, school and Further Education (FE) teaching.
- Increase positive perceptions and consideration of early years childcare careers.
- Drive consideration of working for the NHS, with a focus on increasing applications to NHS entry roles and UCAS degrees for nursing and allied health professionals.



**T**he UK needs talented and ambitious people at the forefront of our public services - from the NHS and adult social care, to the armed forces and the prison and probation service. Communication is a crucial lever for achieving public sector recruitment targets and enabling the effective delivery of our public services.

Our recruitment campaigns will continue to inspire and encourage people to choose the public sector as a destination to start or grow their careers. DfE's recruitment campaigns will motivate applicants by highlighting the unique benefits and rewards of a career in teaching, while DHSC's 'Made with Care' campaign will hero the voices of real life adult social care workers - who, insight shows, are the most compelling and motivating messengers for applicants. MOD's high-impact, multi-channel marketing campaigns showcase the career opportunities available in each branch of the Armed Forces.

Public sector recruitment campaigns also have a secondary benefit for staff retention. By improving general perceptions of these careers and their importance in society, our communications help ensure public sector workers feel valued and recognised for their hard work.

As well as filling public sector roles, our campaigns will also support wider recruitment needs, including in the early years and education sectors. As the demand for childcare continues to grow, DfE's new 'Do Something Big' campaign will help to ensure the workforce keeps pace. The campaign addresses low awareness and consideration of the early years sector among potential applicants by showcasing the rewarding, varied and exciting nature of working with children.

### *Applied innovation*

*As part of GCS' wider focus on innovation, new technology is being harnessed by several major recruitment campaigns, with the potential for these to be scaled and rolled out more widely. The Ministry of Justice is trialling the use of immersive technology to show potential applicants the realities of working in the prison service and combat misconceptions. The Royal Navy's new AI-driven virtual recruiter provides potential recruits with personalised conversations and helps to reduce recruitment call centre inquiries - saving applicants' time and reducing administrative costs.*



# GOV.UK

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# PUBLIC SERVICES

### Overarching communication objective:

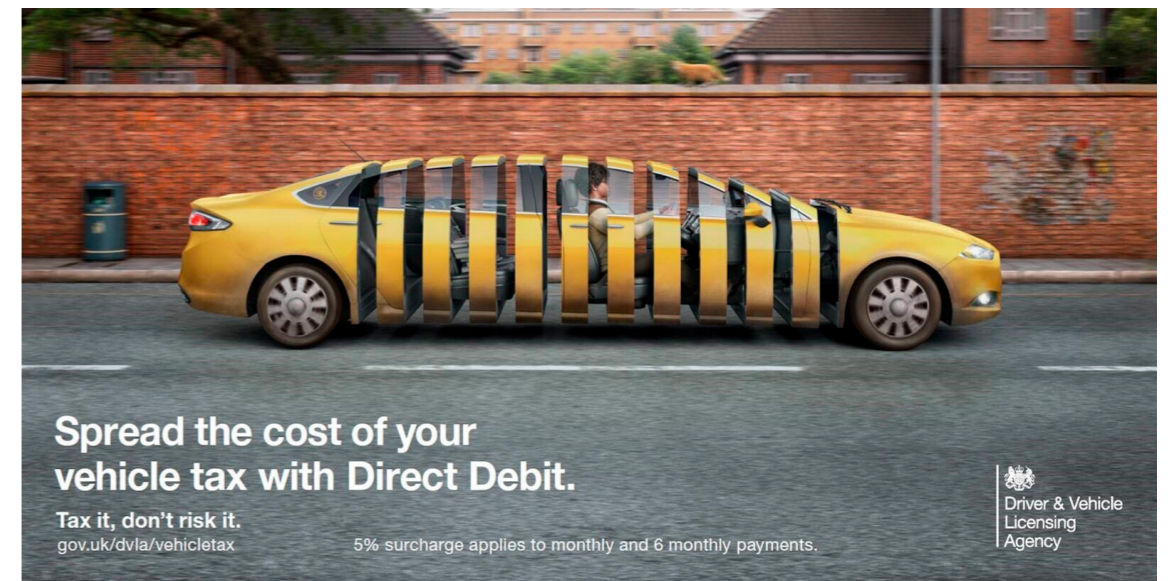
To enable and encourage citizens to access relevant Government services at the right time, in the right way, while keeping people safe.

### Campaign key performance indicators (KPIs):

- Maximise take-up of digital government services, driving time and cost savings.
- Increase tax compliance.
- Reduce the number of public safety incidents on our roads and railways.

→ [Self Assessment sign in](#)

→ [Childcare acco](#)



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**D**igital Government services offer time savings, flexibility and a better user experience for customers. They also offer resource efficiencies and reduced operational costs, saving millions for the taxpayer.

However, key barriers to digital take-up include low awareness, understanding or lack of confidence. Communication offers a crucial lever for addressing these; organisations such as HMRC and the DVLA will deliver campaigns showcasing the benefits and ease of their digital services. The Cabinet Office is also rolling out GOV.UK One Login, a new universal login which makes public services quicker and easier to access. Users will have just one account, one username, one password and one identity check to use many different Government services online. A new campaign will raise awareness and understanding of GOV.UK One Login and its benefits, building trust in the new system and ultimately driving take-up.

We will also support funding for our public services by addressing the tax gap and raising revenue for the Exchequer. HMRC's 'Don't Get Caught Out' campaign will educate audiences on the consequences of ineligible claims, while disrupting the business model of tax avoidance promoters and unscrupulous agents who aggressively promote ineligible repayments. DVLA's vehicle excise duty campaign has generated £798 million over the last three years by targeting evasion hot spots, highlighting the risk of not taxing a vehicle and promoting easy ways to pay and spread payments via direct debit.

Our communications will help the public stay safe on our railways and roads. Network Rail uses targeted, behaviour change campaigns as a vital tool to reduce the number of incidents and fatalities on the railway. These campaigns highlight the dangers and risks in a rail environment and their potentially fatal consequences. The Department for Transport (DfT) also delivers 'THINK!', a highly effective road safety campaign which drives awareness of the social consequences of priority risky driving behaviours, building on the influence of peers to redefine or reinforce social norms and change the underlying attitudes and behaviours that lead to deaths and serious injuries on our roads. Campaign priorities, messages and channels are driven by the latest insights, with highly relevant 'in the moment' interventions nudging audiences at the point of behaviour.

### Safety for vulnerable road users

DfT's THINK! campaign plays a crucial role in encouraging compliance with new road safety legislation. Changes to the Highway Code were supported by a new campaign to shift attitudes and promote safer driving behaviour among UK road users. As well as encouraging uptake of the new guidance, the initiative embedded a broader awareness of the road safety needs for people walking, cycling and horse riding. By September 2023, 86% of drivers had heard of the changes and 90% said they had taken personal action as a result of viewing content from the campaign.



# CHAPTER TWO PERFORMANCE WITH PURPOSE



## GCS STRATEGY COMMITMENTS

Our 2022-25 strategy, '[Performance with Purpose](#)', sets a vision for a more collaborative, innovative and highly-skilled profession, ready to respond to new and emerging opportunities and challenges in the media and technological landscape. The strategy was built around three pillars: Collaboration; Innovation and Improvement; and Great People. It also made over 30 specific commitments for how we would deliver our vision by the end of 2025.

To date, we have completed over 75% of these and we are on track to deliver the remaining commitments. This includes finalising the roll-out of our GCS Advance learning and development programme.

### So far, we have...

- ✓ Re-established the GCS Governance Board and established a new GCS External Advisory Board.
- ✓ Developed one systematic process for monitoring and reporting on campaign performance.
- ✓ Published a new [operating model](#) for Government crisis communications and engaged a surge team of over 100 trained volunteers.
- ✓ Introduced an annual data collection across the GCS community to help senior leaders better understand and support our membership.
- ✓ Updated the [GCS Evaluation Cycle](#), equipping communicators with industry-leading methodologies to effectively measure communication activity.
- ✓ Reviewed and refreshed [propriety guidance](#), and introduced mandatory training in ministerial departments.
- ✓ Established a virtual GCS Innovation Hub to identify the best ideas from the external market and use them to improve government communications.
- ✓ Published new guidelines to help government communication teams work with influencers.
- ✓ Reformed and simplified the advertising, marketing and communications spend control, including introducing multi-year approvals.
- ✓ Updated the [Modern Communications Operating Model](#) and set new [best-practice guidance](#) for GCS digital communications.
- ✓ Developed a new GCS induction approach to support our members on their career pathway from day one.
- ✓ Introduced a bi-annual GCS event to support leadership development and provide networking opportunities.
- ✓ Launched our members-only online portal, GCS Connect.
- ✓ Published our [Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan](#).
- ✓ Launched the [GCS Locations Strategy](#) to better attract and develop talent from across the UK.

The following pages explore each of the Strategy's pillars in more detail, reflecting on the progress we have made to date, as well as the steps we will take over the next 12 months.

# COLLABORATION

**Better collaboration between and within departments is crucial to our success, from delivering audience-led campaigns and ensuring a coherent and cohesive narrative to the public, to sharing insights and learnings across government.**

We have made great strides in tackling organisational silos, particularly in the planning and delivering of communication to focus on audiences. Notable successes include cross-government campaigns, such as 'Help for Households', 'Skills for Life' and 'Stop! Think Fraud', which bring together policies and services from multiple departments, making it easier for audiences to understand and access the support they need. However, we recognise that there are further opportunities for join-up and we remain focused on ensuring our communications are clear, consistent and audience-based.

The central GCS team, based in the Cabinet Office, is now built around the things that we alone can do, and that benefit our members and the public the most. This means improved training, inclusivity and networking opportunities for our members and greater capability to deliver on the government's priorities.

Our members-only online portal, [GCS Connect](#), makes it easier for communicators across government to build networks and access GCS products and services. But we want it to do a lot more. In the coming months we will start to include information on jobs,

locations, and individual communications disciplines. And it will be the host for both GCS Advance training and our in-house AI virtual assistant. We also want it to be our network for innovation - allowing people to share what has worked and what hasn't, to virtually develop and share ideas and to ask for help.

In the year ahead, we will build on this progress by driving even stronger links between the different professions within departments. The improvements we are making in evaluation across the government communication profession mean our work is better understood and valued by colleagues and leaders across the Civil Service. And thanks to our rich audience insights, communication teams are uniquely placed to support ministers to make more informed decisions both on policy and communication.

As well as fostering internal collaboration, we will continue to partner with external organisations and individuals who can help extend the reach of our communications beyond owned and traditional media channels. This includes influencers, who offer a powerful way to authentically reach and engage our target audiences by creating personalised and engaging content for our campaigns. Our new guidance encourages and supports communication teams to work with influencers effectively and transparently.

## ***Communicating in a crisis***

*One area where we are already seeing the value of a more integrated approach across communications and policy is in our response to crises. Last year, GCS published 'Prepare-Respond-Recover' - a new operating model for government crisis communications. We are now building a surge team of over 100 trained volunteers from across GCS and further embedding communication into crisis management alongside those responsible for policy and operational planning. After all, communication is one of most important things the government does in a crisis - reassuring and providing information to the public.*

Heads and Deputy Heads of Discipline have been selected from across the GCS community to represent and convene each of the seven core communications disciplines, helping to raise standards, share best practice and promote continuous improvement, alongside the central GCS team:

<b>Media</b>	Head - Andrew Darby, Department for Education Deputy - Fiona Richards, Department for Transport
<b>External Affairs</b>	Head - Kate Whitty-Johnson, Department for Education Deputy - recruitment ongoing
<b>Marketing</b>	Head - Chloe Saklow, Department for Education Deputy - Jo Parry, Office for National Statistics
<b>Strategic Communications</b>	Head - Sarah Clark, Department for Culture, Media and Sport Deputy - Gemma Taylor, HM Treasury
<b>Internal Communications</b>	Head - Russell Grossman, Office of Rail and Road Deputy - Sara Vogt, Ministry of Justice
<b>Digital</b>	Head - Ed Bearryman, GCS Deputy - Zara Farrar, No10
<b>Data and Insight</b>	Head - Pamela Bremner, Home Office Deputy - recruitment ongoing

# INNOVATION & IMPROVEMENT

GCS wants to be a leader in the innovative use of technologies and data, to drive better effectiveness and impact for the public good. We want to embrace new ideas and ways of working to meet the challenges of today and those in the future. However, the emergence of new technologies, such as generative AI, has brought fresh challenges and raises important ethical questions.

To support this, in 2024 we will publish a new Innovating with Impact Strategy that sets out how teams can innovate with impact, using data and technology to transform communications in a way that aligns with our ethical standards. This Strategy will be an important step in embedding a culture of innovation across GCS by equipping teams with the skills, tools, and frameworks needed to seize the opportunities offered by new technology.

The Strategy will outline a systematic approach to innovation, underpinned by our ethical principles:

- 1. Encourage and identify new ideas that can drive value**
- 2. Rapidly test these through robust piloting**
- 3. Scale the learnings right across GCS**

The biggest private sector advertisers spend around 10% of their advertising budget on innovation. As part of the reforms to our spending controls, we now encourage departments to spend up to 10% of their existing campaign budget on innovative techniques which we can test. More than 30 innovation projects are being piloted as part of this year's campaigns. A single change to our spending controls is supporting departments and our private sector partners to think differently about how we run campaigns.

The GCS Innovation Hub identifies the best ideas from the external market, bringing

together agency partners and technology companies to develop a pipeline of the most promising new technology. It invites UK tech start-ups to pitch their idea for how to improve government communications. Pilots include working with Audiomob, which enables us to better reach key audiences through non-intrusive in-game audio ads.

Our new Framework for Ethical Innovation, which will be published in 2024, will support communicators across government in their use of emerging technologies and data. The framework will clearly set out the safeguards we will adopt to assess new innovative ideas, and will provide government communicators with the confidence that their approach is in line with our ethical principles and standards.

The central GCS team is developing and delivering innovative new tools and platforms for the benefit of all government communicators. This includes the development and roll out of the GCS AI co-pilot, a conversational AI tool for GCS members, tailored to government communications. This brings together a high-performing Large Language Model (LLM) and overlays GCS data, frameworks and standards.

Evaluation of government communications is essential for improving policy outcomes, adapting innovative strategies, promoting learning, demonstrating value, and building public trust. The updated [GCS Evaluation Cycle](#) is designed to provide best-practice guidance for colleagues to most effectively and efficiently evaluate communications across government, whether it is for major paid-for campaigns or low/no-cost communication activities. The Cycle encompasses industry-leading practices that will continue to drive improvements across the profession, enabling communicators to demonstrate the value and impact of campaigns and communication activities.

## ***Introducing the GCS AI co-pilot***

*Developing our own GCS specific AI tool means we can introduce additional privacy and data safeguards, ensuring that we remain in full control of the data we input. Ask it for evaluation measures and it will use the GCS Evaluation Cycle. Ask it for a communication plan and it will use the OASIS method (Objectives, Audience, Strategy, Implementation, Scoring).*

# GREAT PEOPLE

**Great people remain at the heart of our work, and we want GCS members to be confident in using the latest communication practices and techniques.**

That's why we've launched GCS Advance, a substantial new learning and development programme that will deliver a measurable step change in the skills of UK Government communicators. It will operate at four levels - apprentice, practitioner, expert and leader - with a focus on essential future skills in data, digital and AI. The practitioner programme is designed to support those early on in their government communication careers to gain a strong grounding in the profession. The expert programme allows senior managers to deepen their communications understanding through interactive learning, and the leader programme supports communication experts to become well-rounded team leaders.

Registration for the online Practitioner programme is now open, following a successful pilot with 700 participants. It features a mix of core courses (including AI) and elective courses, so that you can tailor your learning to suit your individual needs. The expert programme is now live and the leader programmes will launch later in 2024. Our ambition is for 2,500 GCS members to be part of a GCS Advance programme by March 2025.

Internal communicators play a fundamental role in creating a high-performing and collaborative culture across the Civil Service. By engaging staff and helping organisational leaders communicate effectively with their teams, they ensure people feel involved in their organisation's vision and values. Fundamentally, internal communications bring people together and help them to deliver most effectively.

Building trust with your audience is a central tenet of all good communications. For government communication in particular, maintaining a high standard of propriety and ethics is fundamental to preserving trust in public institutions. GCS has developed a new, mandatory Propriety and Ethics online course for GCS members. This reminds us of the ethical standards which must underpin our work and the core values required of all civil servants: integrity, honesty, objectivity, and impartiality. The course was launched in

November 2023 and more than half of GCS members from ministerial departments have completed the training so far.

Bringing together the advice, guidance, good practice and standards from across the profession into a single place, the Modern Communications Operating Model (MCOM) 3.0 provides simplicity and clarity about the expectations of teams and leaders within the GCS. This MCOM is the third version of this vital source of information and will help make sure all those working across the GCS continue to develop outstanding government communication through great people, effective team structures and clear policies and guidance. MCOM 3.0 is designed to be helpful whatever communication role you do; whether you are new or leading a team and whatever the type and size of organisation you work in. It is also supported by our new self-assessment tool and peer review system, which allows communication teams to effectively measure and share learnings from their activities.

As well as equipping our people with the tools needed to be excellent communicators, GCS is committed to developing a skilled, diverse workforce across the UK. We have therefore developed the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan, which aims to grow a diverse GCS where everyone can reach their potential and ensure that the GCS understands and communicates effectively with every community it serves. Since the plan's launch, we have built on opportunities for our current workforce, from accessibility training and best practice in developing inclusive communications and an updated GCS evaluation cycle, to GCS teams' lessons learnt in communicating with audiences we have previously struggled to reach.

Work is also ongoing to attract, develop and retain the best talent, at all levels, from a diverse range of backgrounds. Guidance has been published for vacancy holders and candidates alike, and our GCS Locations Strategy was launched to support the growth of six GCS communities and expand our expertise across the UK in line with the Levelling Up agenda. Bringing all of this work together will allow our teams to collaborate, innovate and be audience-led in all the communications we produce.

## ***Thriving regional hubs***

*HMRC Communications is leading the way in building stronger communications communities, which currently operate across 14 UK locations.*

*Their recruitment approach includes all levels, from apprentices to SCS roles, with the HMRC Director of Communications (and Champion for the GCS Locations Strategy) as well as half of the team's Deputy Directors now located outside of London.*

*Benefits include a wider talent pool, as well as an increase in candidates with diverse experiences who bring fresh, innovative thinking to government communications.*



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